

Communion of Saints, Forgiveness of Sins, Eternal Life

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to write a journal entry in response to St. Teresa’s advice (from page 111 of the Student Text).
- Students were requested to read Chapter 5: Communion of Saints, Forgiveness of Sins, Eternal Life (pages 118–143).
- Students chose to begin a small service project.
- Students were asked to complete the “My Patron Saints” activity sheet in preparation for this session.

Warm-up (10–15 minutes)

- Form equal-sized groups of three to six. Give each small group a sheet of paper and a pencil. Tell the groups that their challenge is to list everything they can think of that all group members have in common. For example, group members might all attend the same school, prefer the same kind of music, or like the same brand of tennis shoes. The only rule is that they can’t list similar body parts, such as “We all have two eyes, a brain, and ears.” Give the groups three minutes to create their lists. (*Note:* Groups of five or six may need more time, but don’t allow more than four to five minutes.) If you want to add to the urgency and excitement of the game, inform groups when there’s one minute as well as thirty seconds remaining.
- When time is up, find out which group has the longest list and ask members to read the similarities they came up with. Then ask the groups who had similarities not listed to share them. To conclude, use the following questions to foster discussion:
 - How easy was it to discover something in common with another group member? With every group member?
 - What does this reveal about the extent to which we’re alike? The ways in which we’re all different?
 - How can our similarities draw us closer together? How can our differences help us grow closer?

Part I: Lesson (30–40 minutes)

Text Reference: Life Goal; The Communion of Saints (pages 118–126)

- No matter which high school your students attend, ask them to consider all the different groups of people they consider members of that academic community. List them on the board. Help the teens come up with a comprehensive list including students, teachers, administration, staff (secretaries, librarians, janitors), coaches, counselors, etc. Prompt the students to broaden the field if necessary to include parents and alumni. Make sure the students recognize that their school community—no matter its similarities and differences—is far wider than those who are presently in the school.
- Write the following on the board: “The Communion of Saints.” Then, tell the teens that one of the earliest images of the Church (found in the Roman catacombs) is that of a ship or boat sailing in choppy waters. Jesus is at the helm, setting its course. Above the boat, cloudlike figures representing the faithful who have died and are present with God in heaven fill the boat’s sails with zephyrs of their prayers. The deck of the boat is crowded with sturdy folk working the oars. These are the living members of the Church whose shared efforts and prayer power the craft. Below decks are sleeping figures, representing the souls of those who have died (or are now in purgatory), and so are being supported and transported by the efforts and prayers of those on deck and those above the clouds.
- Distribute copies of the activity sheet “A Faithful People, All in the Same Boat” from the end of the lesson. Point out the directions and give the students a few minutes to complete them. Afterward, invite the teens to share with a partner.

- Call attention to the text section “Devotion to the Saints” on page 122. Take a moment to note differences between veneration and worship with regard to our relationship with the saints in heaven. Be sure that the teens understand that the honor and respect we give to those things we venerate is not the same as the worship we give to God alone.
- Call on a few students to share what they discovered about their patron saints by completing the activity sheet “My Patron Saints” they received at their last session and completed at home.
- Then, just for fun, have the students use scrap paper to write their answers to the “Patron Saints” exercise on page 123. (Correct answers: 1-I; 2-C; 3-J; 4-A; 5-H; 6-E; 7-B; 8-F; 9-D; 10-G.)
- Emphasize to the teens that there are many saints among us, and they walk the world incognito. Canonization is for the few, *communion* for all. Also, remind the teens that God has called each of *them* to be a saint (“To all . . . beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” Romans 1:7), an invitation issued at their Baptism.
- Divide the class into four small groups. Assign each group one of the following doctrines about Mary, the greatest saint: the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and of the Church, the Assumption. Distribute copies of the activity sheet “Doctrines of Mary.” Have each group review the material on their topic that is contained in the text (pages 124–125) and to use any other supplementary information you can provide to complete the activity sheet and then present their findings to the class. Tell the groups their presentations should emphasize the difference this belief about Mary makes for us.
- Allow 5–10 minutes for research. Then call on each small group to present its findings.
- Call attention to the assignment on page 127, “Praying with Mary.” Suggest that the teens choose one of these devotions as part of their prayer. Then, before moving on, lead the group in praying the “Hail, Mary.” Afterward, remind the students that it was Mary who was with Jesus at the hour of *his* death. No wonder we pray that she will be with us at the hour of *our* death, too.

Break/Writing Exercise (10 minutes)

- Join the students in a break with refreshments.
- Call attention to the “Discussion Questions” on page 127. Have the students journal their responses to questions 1, 2, and 5.

Text Reference: One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins and The Last Things: Eschatology (pages 127–143)

- Begin the section “One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins” (127–130) by writing the word “**FORGIVENESS**” in capital letters on the board. Use questions like the following to discuss the term:
 - What is forgiveness?
 - What builds forgiveness?
 - What destroys forgiveness?
 - What is your first memory of forgiveness?

Finally, ask the teens: “Do *you* believe in the forgiveness of sins?” Most will respond in the positive. So, ask the question again, “Do you *really* believe in the forgiveness of sins? Think about it. Do you believe that God’s love for you is fire that consumes your sin and liberates you from the obligation of guilt?”

- Distribute the activity sheet “The Forgiveness of Sins” and have the students look up the passage from Isaiah 43:25 and write it in the space provided. When they finish writing, call one of the students to read the passage aloud (“It is I, I, who wipe out, for my own sake, your offenses; your sins I remember no more”).
- Point to “**FORGIVENESS**” on the board again. Emphasize to the teens that Christianity turns on this word. To believe in Christ is to breathe the oxygen of forgiveness. The whole reason Christ comes is for the forgiveness of sins. Now have the teens look up the passage from Luke 1:77 and write it in the space provided. When they finish, ask one of the students to read the passage aloud (“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord, to prepare his way, to give knowledge of salvation to his people, by the forgiveness of their sins”). Stress to the students that the forgiveness Jesus brings is complete restoration of the person broken and beaten by the weight of sin. Forgiveness is *total* medicine.
- Write the word “**SIN**” in capital letters on the board. Ask the students to think of similes that describe or define sin, that is, “Sin is like. . . ” (For example, “Sin is like an oil slick polluting spotless shores.”). List students’ ideas on the board.

- Afterward, tell the teens that Jesus reveals what sin is. It is separation. Jesus tells us that our true origin is in God. *To be is to be with God* and so to be with our true selves. Our first parents envied God and created a new origin for themselves, one rooted in separation. They decided that they, not God, would decide what was good and what was evil. Separation is the original sin. Every sin that follows is a sin of separation—a turning away from God.
- Go on to ask, “What can *we* do about sin?” Accept all reasonable replies, but point out that, in the end, the real answer is “Not much.” Explain to the students that that is why Jesus tells us, “Without me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Sin is too large, too lethal a poison for us. So Jesus offers an antidote to sin.
- Have the students look up the passage from Mark 2:5 and write it in the space provided. When they finish, ask one of the students to read the passage aloud (“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Child, your sins are forgiven’”). Stress to the teens how Jesus makes clear that sin’s opposite is not moral excellence. It is *faith*. Remind the students that admitted sinners never disturb Jesus. For him or her, Jesus always has words of tenderness. But the self-righteous—those who do not believe they need forgiveness—disable Jesus. Forgiveness requires faith, and they have none.
- Call attention to the final paragraph of the section on pages 127–128. Ask one of the students to read the first two sentences of the paragraph aloud. Then have the teens look up the passage from Romans 6:3–4, 11 and write it in the space provided. When they finish, have the entire class read the passage aloud (“Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. Consequently, you, too, must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus”).
- Conclude this section by distributing copies of the activity sheet “Sin and Forgiveness” from the end of this lesson. Give the students time to complete it on their own. Afterward, check answers: 1-S; 2-I; 3-N; 4-S; 5-E; 6-P; 7-A; 8-R; 9-A; 10-T; 11-I; 12-O; 13-N. Answer to puzzle SIN = SEPARATION. Add “= **SEPARATION**” to the word “SIN” on the board.
- If you have time, show a video presentation on the sacrament of Penance, for example, *What Catholics Believe: Reconciliation* from Oblate Media. Otherwise help the teens better appreciate the sacrament of Penance by playing devil’s advocate. Ask: Jesus said that God is love, is all-forgiving, and knows what’s in my heart. If this is true, why can’t I just say I’m sorry and ask for forgiveness in my heart? Why do I have to go to a priest for the sacrament of Penance? See if the students can give you credible reasons for celebrating the sacrament. If they need help, use an analogy like the following: *Put yourself in the shoes of the prodigal son as he sat in the pig sty. Could you return home “in your heart”? No, you would have to pull yourself out of that sty and trudge back to your home and family “in person.” The sacrament of Penance is our way to return home to God in person. Once there, God forgives us and welcomes us home.*
- Introduce the topic of death and the last things by asking the students to turn to the text section “R.I.P” (page 136) and to write their own obituary. Have the teens share obituaries. Then ask: What do you fear most about death? Ascertain whether the students are fearful of death itself, the dying process, their own death, the death of a loved one, or God’s judgment. Allow some time for discussion. Conclude the discussion by helping the teens see that people of faith don’t see death as some great barrier to life—or even as life’s opposite. Instead, we see it as but a bump on the road to heaven.
- Call attention to “The Resurrection of the Body” (pages 132–133). Make certain the students recognize that resurrection does not mean a return to everyday life. Rather, it is a breakthrough to the larger life Jesus often spoke about. Like Jesus, we won’t come back from the dead to everyday life, we’ll go through it. Also, like Jesus, we will rise as total persons—soul *and* body. To rise any other way would be to deny our creation.
- Create two columns on the board. Label one “**Heaven**,” the other “**Hell**.” Invite the students to describe what they think each must be like, not what they look like, but what they feel like. How do people in heaven feel about God and about one another? What about the people in hell, what do they feel? As the students offer their opinions, help them recognize some of the following differences:
 - Heaven is the meeting of God and human beings. Jesus didn’t soar off into space. He went home. Heaven is our home, too.
 - Hell is a refusal to answer God’s call to friendship. It is *separation*. Believe it or not, hell has some attraction. It frees us from the demands that friendship makes. It absolves us from being concerned with others and flatters us into thinking we’re self-sufficient.

- God sends no one to hell, no one to heaven. Hell or heaven is our option, and we make the choice in this life.
- Hell is chosen isolation, total loneliness, something of our making.
- Heaven is complete and perfect relationship, something only God can make. And God has made it for us.
- Write the word “**Purgatory**” on the board. Ask the students to suggest some experiences that might be considered purgatorial. For example, ask:
 - What are some experiences, though painful, that bring us closer to God, or open our eyes to see God’s action in the world?
 - How might the popular slogan “No pain, no gain” be applied to the state of purgatory?
- Call attention to the text section “Amen” on page 140. Point out the definition of Amen in the margin. Explain to the students that they have just concluded their coverage of the Apostles’ Creed. Amen is a fitting end point to their study. It affirms their faith in all the creed recounts.

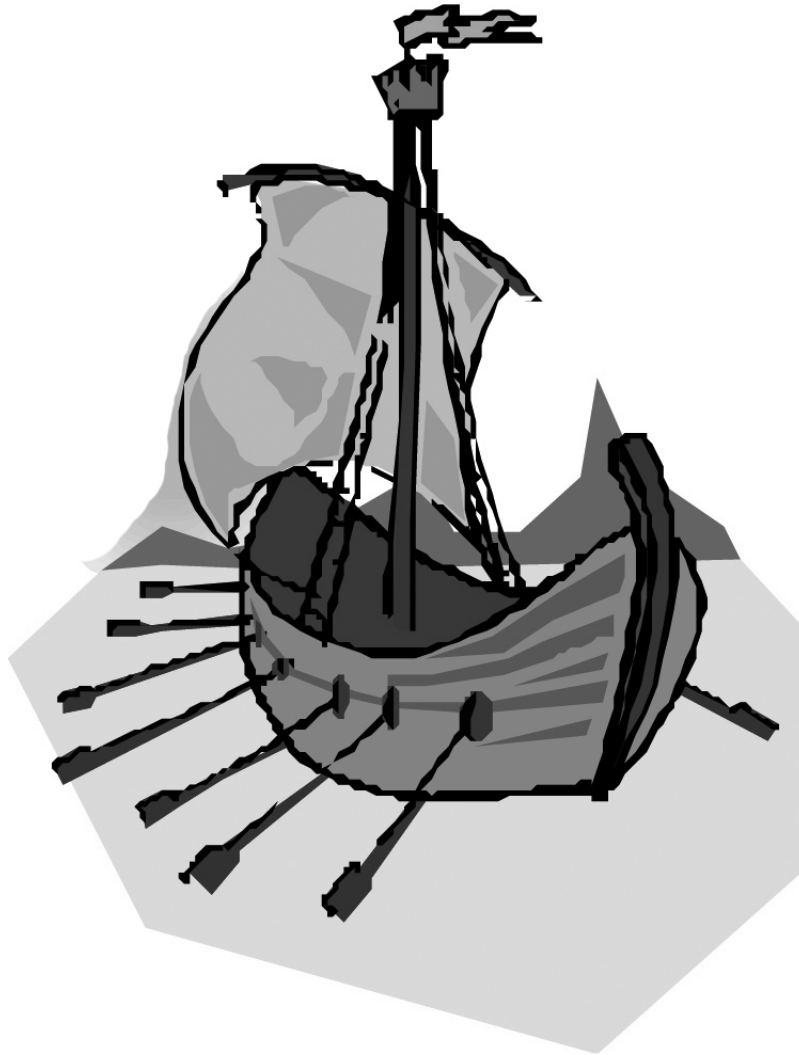
Prayer Experience (5 minutes)

- Gather the students around the Paschal (Easter) Candle. Light the candle.
- Close by praying the Apostles’ Creed together, ending with a resounding “Amen!”

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Call attention to the “Review Questions” on page 141. Tell the students to write their responses to questions 1, 2, 5, and 6 in their journals.
- Direct the students to read the Introduction to Part 2 of their text, *We Hope: Celebrating the Christian Mystery* (pages 144–147) and Chapter 6: *The Sacraments of Initiation* (pages 148–167) in preparation for the next session.

☀ A Faithful People All in the Same Boat



Above the boat, add names of saints in heaven you especially respect and venerate. By the oars, list the names of living saints such as your family and friends. Don't forget yourself. Below the oars add names of the faithful people you know who have died.

Doctrines of Mary

* Name of the Doctrine: _____

* Facts about the doctrine (e.g., scriptural references; Church documents explaining the doctrine; special days associated with it; religious symbols, art work, or music; shrines):

* The difference this doctrine makes for the faith of believers:



The Forgiveness of Sins

* **Isaiah 43:25**

* **Luke 1:77**

* **Mark 2:5**

* **Romans 6:3-4, 11**

Sin and Forgiveness

Read each pair of "If" statements below. Decide which letters to circle. Print the letters you choose in order in the spaces below. If you choose wisely, you will reveal an important message.

1. If Baptism forgives only original sin, circle G.
If Baptism forgives all sin, circle S.
2. If the two kinds of sin are original and actual, circle I.
If they are original and unoriginal, circle O.
3. If the physical effects of original sin are anxiety and fear, circle D.
If they are suffering and death, circle N.
4. If all sins are the same, circle D.
If sins differ in degree, circle S.
5. If venial sins are worse than mortal sins, circle I.
If vices are bad habits that dispose us to sin, circle E.
6. If there are seven capital sins, circle P.
If venial sins destroy sanctifying grace, circle S.
7. If anger is not one of the capital sins, circle P.
If greed is a capital sin, circle A.
8. If venial sins cause us to stumble on the path to Jesus, circle R.
If pride is not a vice, circle L.
9. If Jesus withheld forgiveness from those who sought it, circle E.
If venial sins are harmful to us, circle A.
10. If mortal sin is the most serious type of sin, circle T.
If our sinfulness is not our personal responsibility, circle A.
11. If sin is only a metaphor, circle S.
If it is possible for us to sin mortally, circle I.
12. If hell is a choice we make by deciding to act against God's will, circle O.
If Jesus did not give his followers the authority to forgive sin, circle E.
13. If deacons can forgive sins in the sacrament of Penance, circle D.
If contrition means being truly sorry for our sins, circle N.

_____ = _____